

## THOMAS MANN'S INTERPRETATIONS OF *DER TOD IN VENEDIG* AND THEIR RELIABILITY

by Herbert Lehnert

One of the last comments by Thomas Mann on his *Der Tod in Venedig* is found in a letter to Franz H. Mautner, the author of a valuable study on the Greek elements in Mann's story.<sup>1</sup> In this letter Mann claimed his memory to be the source of an Odyssey quotation in the text. Homer's verses, he writes, had been well preserved in his memory from his days as a boy. There is ample evidence, however, that the source for the Homer quotation in the text was Erwin Rohde's *Psyche*, a book from which Mann also took other material for *Der Tod in Venedig*.<sup>2</sup>

Why did he not name Rohde's book as a source of *Der Tod in Venedig*? *Psyche* is a most respectable book, written in a beautiful style rarely found among German scholars, and it is still recognized as the standard work on the topic, namely the Greek beliefs concerning the existence of the soul after death. Could he have forgotten the rather elaborate process, that we can reconstruct, of not only reading the book, but also pencil-marking some passages, excerpting some of these, and then using them in the story? This is quite possible after forty years, although he still owned the book when living in his last home in Switzerland, and placed it in his library among works on mythology which he used for *Joseph*.

He had mentioned his early knowledge of classical legends much earlier in "Kinderspiele" (1904). There he describes a mythology book which contained "packende Auszüge" from Homer and Virgil, "die ich seitenweise auswendig wußte" (XI, 329).<sup>3</sup> By using the word "Auszüge" he suggests that, as a boy, he came into close contact with Homer and Virgil (in translation), but he readily admits the use of a secondary source as a help in his self-education. The letter to Mautner suggests, on the other hand, intensive study of the sources themselves.

It may be granted that Mann's memory about the source of the Odyssey quotation was vague. But the emphasis put on his early self-education in

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the classics contains an element of fiction. The letter to Mautner is written by Mann the humanist, the late representative of a great heritage. About Mann's self-interpretations, T. J. Reed in a study on Mann's early acquaintance with Heine's *Ludwig Börne* says quite correctly: "Rather than clarifications, his statements are a subcategory of creation itself, aimed at adjusting and altering the import of past productions in the light of the new positions from which they are regarded."<sup>4</sup> These semi-creative actions force us to consider Thomas Mann's self-interpretations critically. We have to compare several if not all of his utterances on a given work with each other and then try to evaluate them. This we will now do in regard to *Der Tod in Venedig*.

The most valuable comments by the author are those on the origin of his work. The best known story concerning the origin of *Der Tod in Venedig* is that told by Thomas Mann in "Lebensabriß" (XI, 123-124). Here he reports having interrupted work on *Felix Krull* in the spring of 1911. In May he spent some time together with his wife (in contrast to the lonely Aschenbach) on the Lido-beach near Venice. Several curious encounters, among them the three incarnations of death (the strange tourist in Munich, the suspicious gondolier, the malicious street singer), Tazio himself, and others were real life persons whom he observed. Letters from that time reveal that the Manns really went first to Brioni and then to the Lido of Venice. An unpublished letter to Hans von Hülsen of April 30, 1911, written before their departure, tells only of plans for Brioni. Another, written after returning (June 15, 1911), says ". . . denn Brioni war nichts für die Dauer." Thus Aschenbach's change of mind that sent him to Venice was of autobiographical origin too. The external events in *Der Tod in Venedig* seem really to be based on real life experiences. Thus the account in "Lebensabriß" presents pertinent information which we have no reason to doubt except for that contained in one sentence which, although probably true, can only be understood properly in connection with other information which Thomas Mann himself has provided. This sentence is:

Die Novelle war so anspruchslos beabsichtigt wie nur irgendeine meiner Unternehmungen; sie war als rasch zu erledigende Improvisation und Einschaltung in die Arbeit an dem Betrügerroman gedacht, als eine Geschichte, die sich nach Stoff und Umfang ungefähr für den 'Simplicissimus' eignen würde (XI, 123).

From the beginning of Mann's writing *Der Tod in Venedig* in the summer of 1911, epistolary references speak of the work in quite respectful terms which do not agree with the statements in "Lebensabriß." A letter to Hülsen of July 3, 1911, considered again below, speaks of plans for a "schwierige, wenn nicht unmögliche Novelle." On July 18, he writes to Philipp Witkop<sup>5</sup> that he is at work on "eine recht sonderbare Sache, die ich aus Venedig mitgebracht habe, Novelle, ernst und rein im Ton, einen Fall von Knaben-

liebe bei einem alternden Künstler behandelnd. Sie sagen 'hum, hum!' Aber es ist sehr anständig." In another letter to Hülsen (August 21, 1911) he refers to the Venetian story and says that it is to be published in *Die Neue Rundschau*, "wo der einzig richtige Ort dafür ist." Thus there is considerable evidence against *Der Tod in Venedig* having been intended in a light vein. In several letters written from July 1911 until the work was completed a year later in July of 1912, Mann refers repeatedly to the difficulties of the subject. He calls the work "gewagte Novelle" (*Br.*, 92). He might have doubted its value at one time but he writes Hülsen on February 7, 1912: "Es scheint mir übrigens nun doch selbst, daß es eine bedeutende Sache wird."

Mann probably had not expected from the outset that he would need a full year to finish the work. But the intention to write for the humorous magazine *Simplicissimus* only a short-story such as "Der Wille zum Glück" (1896), "Der Tod" (1897), "Gerächt" (1899), "Der Weg zum Friedhof" (1900), "Ein Glück" (1904), must have been only short-lived if it existed at all. Why this alleged intention received so much emphasis in connection with *Der Tod in Venedig*, why Mann used an object so scarcely fitted for the purpose of demonstrating his peculiarity of planning his works too small remains enigmatic.

Another short story which had first appeared in *Simplicissimus*, "Schwere Stunde," may give us a clue. It is an exception to the usual light tones of these stories; this portrait of Schiller had appeared in the special Schiller centennial issue of *Simplicissimus* in 1905. Among the ideas Thomas Mann had before writing *Der Tod in Venedig* there might have existed one of writing a similar Goethe-portrait.

Goethe indeed had a part in the origin of *Der Tod in Venedig*. In two letters written within five days in 1915, Thomas Mann reports his original intention of dealing with the problem of the dignity of an artist and of the tragedy of mastership by telling the story of Goethe's last love, his passion for Ulrike von Levetzow in Marienbad "eine böse, schöne, groteske, erschütternde Geschichte, die ich vielleicht trotzdem noch einmal erzähle, aus der aber vorderhand einmal der Tod in Venedig geworden ist" (*Br.*, 123).<sup>6</sup>

The same story is told in a letter to the writer Carl Maria von Weber of July 4, 1920.

Leidenschaft als Verwirrung und Entwürdigung war eigentlich der Gegenstand meiner Fabel,—was ich ursprünglich erzählen wollte, war überhaupt nichts Homo-Erotisches, es war die—grotesk gesehene—Geschichte [*sic*] des Greises Goethe zu jenem kleinen Mädchen in Marienbad . . . diese Geschichte mit allen ihren schauerlich-komischen, hoch-blamablen, zu ehrfürchtigem Gelächter stimmenden Situationen, diese peinliche, rührende und große Geschichte, die ich eines Tages vielleicht doch noch schreibe (*Br.*, 177).

Earlier, in a letter to Julius Bab of March 2, 1913, Mann discusses Goethe's last passion, this time not in direct connection with *Der Tod in Venedig*, but in answer to a question Bab had asked in a previous letter. It is worthy of note that he had corresponded with Bab in regard to a critical review Bab wrote on *Fiorenza* and *Der Tod in Venedig*. In the same letter from which the following quotation is taken, Mann announced his intention to send Bab a copy of the public edition of the story in book form.

Ob ich Goethes letzte Leidenschaft in Marienbad so anders sehe, als Sie? Ja;— wenn Sie dafür halten, daß sie ihm nur "Verjüngung" gebracht hat. Ohne eine groteske [sic] *Entwürdigung* wird es kaum abgegangen sein, wenigstens hie und da. Ich sehe, wie der Alte das Kind, einen Hügel hinan haschen will und *hinfällt*. Sie lacht und *weint* dann. Und immerfort will er sie heiraten. Schaurig. Aber ich antizipiere. . . .<sup>7</sup>

The last remark refers to his intention to write later on this subject. Goethe's situation in Marienbad is called "grotesk." Mann sees the dignity of the great man contrasted with embarrassing moments of which the passage in the Bab-letter gives an example. This may have been the element in the early conception which suggested a story of the *Simplicissimus* type. And yet, the complex character of the Marienbad story as well as that of the Aschenbach story was quite clear to the author. This has become evident from the letter passages quoted above. Thus we must considerably reduce the value of the passage in "Lebensabriß" that speaks of an intended *Simplicissimus* story.

The problem of the conflicting comments on the origin of *Der Tod in Venedig* is not resolved by earlier or later comments, rather the fact that we have a problem is illuminated. The comment that a "*Simplicissimus*-Novellchen" was planned appeared in 1925 in an answer to an inquiry, "Meine Arbeitsweise" (XI, 474). In the same year, Arthur Eloesser published an article in *Die Neue Rundschau* "Zur Entstehungsgeschichte des 'Tods in Venedig'"<sup>8</sup> for which, beyond doubt, Mann had supplied the information, perhaps in private conversations, although no source is named.<sup>9</sup> This article declares the "Goethe in Marienbad" topic to be the original intention of *Der Tod in Venedig* even using the same story of Goethe's falling to the ground as Mann told it in the letter to Bab.

Another such pair of comments is contained in two Princeton lectures. The introduction to *Der Zauberberg* tells the story of the *Simplicissimus* plan (XI, 607), while an unpublished lecture on his own work, delivered at Princeton in the spring of 1940, gives the "Goethe in Marienbad" topic as the origin of the Venetian story.<sup>10</sup>

It could be argued that the whole Goethe-Marienbad relation to *Der Tod in Venedig* is an early attempt by Thomas Mann to associate himself and his work with Goethe. A similar attempt has been observed in his associa-

tion of the dichotomy of "Geist and Kunst" in *Fiorenza* with Schiller's contrast of "naive und sentimentalische Dichtung" in an article for *Blätter des deutschen Theaters* when *Fiorenza* was to be performed on the stage.<sup>11</sup> However, the main argument against such an assertion is the passage of the Bab-letter of 1913 which demonstrates his real interest in the Marienbad episode. Mann did not associate *Der Tod in Venedig* with the "Goethe in Marienbad" theme in this letter. The Goethe version of the origin of *Der Tod in Venedig* appears to be used rather esoterically. An exception is perhaps the Eloesser article whose publication may or may not have been authorized by Mann. The issue of *Die Neue Rundschau* where it appeared was compiled in honor of Mann's fiftieth birthday.

Even if Thomas Mann really had wanted to establish this association with Goethe, for the purpose of seeing his own image glorified, this would not affect the creditability of his own comment that the Marienbad episode had a part in the origin of *Der Tod in Venedig*. The dignified Goethe in an undignified, grotesque situation, even more so than Schiller in the first paragraph of "Schwere Stunde," seems really close to situations near the end of *Der Tod in Venedig*, and it is fully credible that Thomas Mann was interested in such a topic. *Lotte in Weimar* still shows many traces of this early approach to Goethe.

I do not find any reason either to doubt Mann's statements that he read *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* several times during the writing of *Der Tod in Venedig* (Br., 176),<sup>12</sup> although such a statement might be considered especially suspicious by anybody who has become oversensitive to self-created legends, whose presence in Mann cannot be denied. But the influence of *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* on *Der Tod in Venedig* can be shown. Points of comparison are the destructive character of passion that undermines the dignity of both Eduard and Aschenbach; the use of allusive motifs foreshadowing the entry of demonic forces; and the motif of water, symbolizing the uncontrollable element. Stylistic traits in Mann's story, such as the sudden change to the present tense connected with rapid short clauses, and general observations presented in the form of an aphorism, are taken from Goethe's novel.<sup>13</sup>

The ironic balance of reverence for a beloved tradition and the simultaneous interest in the comical possibilities in it is so typical of Mann that also the following statement in "Lebensabriß" about the origin of *Felix Krull* is credible:

... ein phantastischer geistiger Reiz ging aus von der parodistischen Idee, ein Element geliebter Überlieferung das Goethisch-Selbstbildnerisch-Autobiographische, Aristokratisch-Bekannerische, ins Kriminelle zu übertragen. Wirklich ist diese Idee die Quelle großer Komik (XI, 122).<sup>14</sup>

If a parody of Goethe is accepted as a part of Thomas Mann's interest in

*Krull*, then this can give us clues as to the genesis of the link between *Der Tod in Venedig* and Goethe in the Marienbad topic.

A small detour to the writing of *Felix Krull* will prove helpful. After the completion of *Königliche Hoheit* in 1909, Thomas Mann wrote his brother Heinrich Mann that he was making preparations for writing an essay and "eine Novelle, die sich ideal an 'K.H.' anschließen wird, aber doch eine andere Atmosphäre haben und, glaube ich, sozusagen schon etwas '18. Jahrhundert' enthalten wird."<sup>15</sup> This description does not fit Mann's intended "Friedrich"-novel because the latter was definitely and not "sozusagen" related to the eighteenth century. It may perhaps refer to the "Maja"-plan which was intended as a social novel with a *fin de siècle* Munich setting and a woman's story of degrading passion in the center. "Sozusagen schon etwas 18. Jahrhundert . . ." fits the *Felix Krull* idea much better. *Krull* lives in a manageable world with which he optimistically agrees; he is untouched by the problematical nineteenth century, by the Schopenhauer-Wagner-Nietzsche world. However, the passage in the letter may also refer to one of the intentions recognizable in the origin of *Der Tod in Venedig*. True, the Marienbad episode is nineteenth century, but Goethe as a figure belongs at least as much to the eighteenth as to the nineteenth century. The Marienbad episode could be seen as a clash between the eighteenth century (cf. the eldest Buddenbrook) and the nineteenth as represented in *Trilogie der Leidenschaft*, that is, the clash of an orderly, natural, clear world with a dark and tragic one.

Work on *Felix Krull* started in 1910. An early reference in a letter to Kurt Martens (January 11, 1910) allows the conclusion that Mann saw certain autobiographical possibilities in the subject. Because of the impostor hero these possibilities could only be self-satirical: "Ich sammle, notiere, studiere jetzt für etwas längst geplantes, ganz Sonderbares: 'Die Bekenntnisse des Hochstaplers.' Ich bin selbst überrascht, was ich dabei aus mir heraus-hole."<sup>16</sup> Five weeks later he writes to his brother that he is reading Kleist as a preparation for *Krull* and that he became furious with Goethe's mistreatment of Kleist.<sup>17</sup> Thomas Mann displays considerable knowledge here because he compares Goethe's silence about "Die Verlobung in San Domingo" with his praise of Körner's *Toni*, which was based on Kleist's story. It seems that we have here a combination which goes to the roots of both *Felix Krull* and *Der Tod in Venedig*: satirical autobiography and an interest in the eighteenth century and Goethe, which suggest an atmosphere of clarity in concepts and forms that are manageable.<sup>18</sup>

To what extent the personal autobiography is an element in the earliest parts of *Krull* becomes clear if one compares the largely identical wording of the autobiographical presentation of the prince-playing of Mann as a boy with *Krull's* narration of the same game (XI, 328; VII, 272). Other examples are the love of sleep (VII, 270 and XI, 334—some passages



identical), the death of the father with subsequent liquidation of business which, in *Krull*, is transposed to the level of satire. Later Felix assumed more and more his own life and moved away from that of the author. Nevertheless, Mann's interest in autobiography continued, perhaps it was transferred for a time to the story "Wie Jappe und Do Escobar sich prügelten" (first published in February 1911) which is told in the first person and seems to be largely autobiographical. In *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen* Mann occasionally speaks of his "autobiographischer Hang" (XII, 105).

The interest in *Dichtung und Wahrheit* is quite natural from this point of view. It is the classical German autobiography, and it has the eighteenth century as its background. Any reading of Goethe's autobiography suggests the general problem of a relationship between an author's biography and his works. This relationship is treated in Mann's Chamisso essay, which was written immediately before *Der Tod in Venedig*. In the concluding paragraph of this essay a parallel is drawn between Chamisso and Goethe: "Es ist die alte gute Geschichte. Werther erschoss sich, aber Goethe blieb am Leben" (IX, 57). This is, of course, the way Goethe explained the origin of *Werthers Leiden* in *Dichtung und Wahrheit*.<sup>19</sup>

Goethe described his relationship to death and suicide and told how the news of Jerusalem's death caused the novel to take shape:

. . . das Ganze schoß von allen Seiten zusammen und ward eine solide Masse, wie das Wasser im Gefäß, das eben auf dem Punkte des Gefrierens steht, durch die geringste Erschütterung sogleich in festes Eis verwandelt wird.

It is noteworthy that Thomas Mann used the same simile, partially with identical wording, in several statements on *Der Tod in Venedig*. In an unpublished letter of May 28, 1913, he remarked "Es stimmte einmal alles, es schoß zusammen, und der Krystall war rein."<sup>20</sup> This sentence is repeated literally in a letter to Felix Bertaux written ten years later (*Br.*, 206). In "Lebensabriß" the image of a crystal is pursued further and quite fittingly used to describe the self-observation of the artist during the creation of a story whose value lies in the multitude of aspects, relations and levels of narration:

Hier schoß, im eigentlich kristallinen Sinn des Wortes, vieles zusammen, ein Gebilde zu zeitigen, das im Licht mancher Facette spielend, in vielfachen Beziehungen schwebend, den Blick dessen, der sein Werden tätig überwachte, wohl zum Träumen bringen konnte (XI, 123).<sup>21</sup>

I believe that we can take this as a rather correct recollection of what had happened nineteen years before "Lebensabriß" was written, in the summer of 1911 in Bad Tölz. The letter to Hülsen of July 3, 1911, which was mentioned earlier, was written a few weeks after the Manns had returned from Venice. The Chamisso essay had been completed after the return

and Mann now considered a "schwierige, wenn nicht unmögliche Novelle." This may refer to the Goethe-Ulrike topic as well as the story of Gustav von Aschenbach. The reference to Goethe's relationship to Werther at the end of "Chamisso" and the crystal-image which appears at the appropriate section of *Dichtung und Wahrheit* (and is later found associated rather consistently with the origin of *Der Tod in Venedig*) make it very likely that the story of the origin of Werther in the thirteenth book of *Dichtung und Wahrheit* was fresh in his mind at the time. The link to the Marienbad episode is the first poem of Goethe's "*Trilogie der Leidenschaft*," "An Werther."

Resignation ("Entsagung") was required of Goethe in 1772 and in 1823; resignation, even though on a smaller scale, seems also to have been required of Thomas Mann during the Lido-journey of 1911. One of the letters which stated the link of *Der Tod in Venedig* with the "Goethe in Marienbad" topic was the one to Carl Maria von Weber written in 1920. Immediately following this statement we find this sentence:

Was damals hinzukam, war ein persönlich-lyrisches Reiseerlebnis, das mich bestimmte, die Dinge durch Einführung des Motivs der "Verbotenen" Liebe auf die Spitze zu stellen (*Br.*, 177).<sup>22</sup>

Thus the origin of *Der Tod in Venedig* can be summed up as follows: Mann was interested in the relationship of biography and fiction and in Goethe's autobiography because of Mann's intention to parody *Dichtung und Wahrheit* in *Felix Krull*. As is obvious from the text, the *Krull* topic proved not very suitable for a Goethe-parody. During the trip to Brioni and the Lido, which Mann undertook with his wife, a number of strange events happened. The most important seems to have been that "persönlich-lyrisches Reiseerlebnis" which demanded restraint and resignation such as Goethe had shown. Thomas Mann's imagination produced different circumstances which might have resulted in embarrassing situations for him and a loss of dignity. These imagined events or similar ones were projected into Goethe's Marienbad episode and led to Mann's seeing Goethe in grotesque situations like chasing Ulrike and falling. (It may be noted that the motif of physical failure is incorporated in *Der Tod in Venedig* [cf. VIII, 493, especially the use of the words "er . . . versagt, verzichtet . . ."].) For a brief period Mann considered writing a short story similar to "Schwere Stunde." The connection with Goethe's biography reminded Mann of the way Goethe transformed a personal experience into an immortal work of art. The history of the writing of *Werther* as told in *Dichtung und Wahrheit* led to the motif of fascination with death which had been recurrent in Thomas Mann's works since *Buddenbrooks* and "Tristan," and which was one result of his strong emotional ties to Wagner's work. Wagner's autobiography had an influence on *Der Tod in*



*Venedig*, as was shown by Werner Vortriede.<sup>23</sup> Mann's interest in Platen, who wrote Venetian Sonnets and the poem "Tristan," is closely related. Thus the intended short story began to develop a considerable amount of gravity. It moved away from a parallel to "Schwere Stunde."

In his unpublished lectures on his own works for Princeton students, Mann calls the elegy from *Trilogie der Leidenschaft* a cry which came from a deeply troubled man who felt himself to be near his ruin, a designation which is confirmed by Goethe's text. Mann calls this condition a death before death. But Goethe did not die, and that might have been one reason why very soon Mann decided to invent a character whom he could put to death. There are only fifteen days between the day he sent off the Chamisso essay and considered writing a "Novelle," and the letter to Witkop of July 18, 1911 which definitely refers to the Aschenbach-story. The news of Gustav Mahler's death in Vienna, which had reached Mann in Brioni, and the "princely" bulletins about his last illness appearing in the Viennese press helped to materialize the figure of Aschenbach (XI, 583-584). Nevertheless, an interest in a parallel between his work with that of Goethe remained. It was transferred to *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*. "Ein Gleichgewicht von Sinnlichkeit und Sittlichkeit wurde angestrebt [in *Der Tod in Venedig*], wie ich es in den 'Wahlverwandtschaften' ideal vollendet fand, die ich während der Arbeit am T. i. V., wenn ich recht erinnere, fünf mal gelesen habe" (Br., 176).

The autobiographical element in *Der Tod in Venedig* is especially strong in the second chapter. How near—in places—Aschenbach is to Mann in this small scale "Entwicklungsroman" has often been pointed out before. As the story develops, however, the mythical element, which was present as early as in the first chapter, becomes more and more important. Perhaps the role Goethe played in the origin of the story suggested the use of classical myth as a stylistic device. However, myth comes to life as the story develops; Aschenbach undergoes a transformation which goes beyond the use German classicism made of myth. In this, the Rohde-influence is felt.

It is curious, therefore, to note that Mann's own interpretations very seldom mention this, in my opinion, most important characteristic of *Der Tod in Venedig*. In a letter to his brother he displays a certain doubt as to whether Heinrich would approve of the work. However, "Besonders ein antikisierendes Kapitel scheint mir gelungen" (Br., 93). This obviously refers to the fourth chapter. Josef Hofmiller, in a review on *Der Tod in Venedig*, had declared the mythical element in it an important one.<sup>24</sup> Mann seems to have had this critic in mind when he wrote to Amann, "... das Bildungs-Griechentum nahm man als Selbstzweck; und doch war es nur Hilfsmittel und geistige Zuflucht des Erlebenden. Der Charakter des Ganzen ist ja eher protestantisch als antik."<sup>25</sup> Both comments must be

viewed with Heinrich Mann's novel-cycle *Die Göttinnen* in mind. The letter to Heinrich Mann of April 1912 sees an affinity, the letter of September 1915 denies it. It is noteworthy that this Amann letter contains ideas and formulations which were later incorporated in *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen*. The writing of *Betrachtungen* began in November 1915,<sup>26</sup> but preparations were probably made in September, perhaps even earlier. The "Zola" essay by Heinrich Mann had not been published yet, but Thomas' attitude towards Heinrich seems to have been firmly established by that time.<sup>27</sup>

"Gedanken im Kriege," which appeared in the November 1914 issue of *Die Neue Rundschau*, contains the first of the long sequence of Mann's own references to the second chapter of *Der Tod in Venedig*. Mann asserts that a moral will had started before the war, "ein neuer Wille, das Verworfen zu verwerfen, dem Abgrund die Sympathie zu kündigen."<sup>28</sup> This will, unfortunately, had been misused by a group of writers designated "alles kluge Lumpenpack"—most probably the expressionists. Among the critics of *Der Tod in Venedig*, as Mann well knew, was Stefan George who is reported to have said that Mann in his work had dragged the most holy into the sphere of decadence (*Br.*, 179). Perhaps it was a defense when Mann developed a tendency to link *Der Tod in Venedig* with a counter-movement against that kind of nineteenth-century thought which is characterized by skepticism, relativism, and impressionism. This tendency developed further during the war and had consequences much later.

In a small article, written approximately at the same time, Mann deals with the relationship of "Leben" and "Geist" under the aspect of war. The second sentence of the article is a quotation from *Der Tod in Venedig*,<sup>29</sup> and in its last section the article reports Mann's happiness about letters from the trenches which have told the author that sometimes among the warriors ("Kämpfer") there is talk about his works, especially of the last one, "einer Geschichte vom Tode, und daß diese ihnen 'niemals näher war.'" Turning to his critics Mann says, "Ein Gebild, welches heute und dort besteht . . . kann es so falsch, so schmähsch sein, wie viele von euch ausschreien, als ich es hingab?" We recognize the situation of self-defense against critics together with an attempt to relate *Der Tod in Venedig* to current intellectual history. In a letter to Amann of August 3, 1915, he writes, "Sehen Sie den 'Tod in Venedig' an! Gut oder schlecht—aber giebt [*sic*] es ein Buch, das zeitlich notwendiger an seinem Platze stünde?"<sup>30</sup>

A passage in the next letter to Amann refers to his critics more directly:

Was den "Tod in Venedig" betrifft, so bin ich heute kaum noch ein kompetenter Ausleger, ich habe die Komposition fast vergessen.<sup>31</sup> Aber so viel weiß ich, daß ich fast durchweg aufs Plumpste mißverstanden worden bin. Am peinlichsten

war, daß man mir die "hieratische Atmosphäre" als einen persönlichen Anspruch auslegte,—während sie nichts als mimicry war . . .<sup>32</sup>

This idea is continued in *Betrachtungen* where he speaks of the misunderstanding of critics "als sei die 'hieratische Atmosphäre,' der 'Meisterstil' dieser Erzählung ein persönlicher Anspruch, etwas, womit ich *mich* zu umgeben und auszudrücken nun lächerlicherweise ambitionierte,—während es sich um Anpassung, ja Parodie handelte . . ." (XII, 105). The "Anpassung" that Mann has in mind is an adaptation to the spirit of Goethe. We have to remember that Mann's concept of parody is a playful one; it does not exclude naiveté. On June 6, 1919 he writes to Josef Ponten, stating his opposition to most of the new (i.e. expressionistic) literature and quoting from a letter another author had written him:

"Liebe ist das Feldgeschrei; aber soviel Liebe, um einen anständigen Satz zu schreiben, bringt man nicht auf." Sehr gut. Und so freut es mich, daß der "Tod in Venedig" Ihnen zugesagt hat. Unsereiner ist offenbar zu sehr *Humanist*, sit venia verbo, um dem künstlerischen Bolschewismus Geschmack abgewinnen zu können. Unter uns gesagt ist der Stil meiner Novelle etwas *parodistisch*. Es handelt sich da um eine Art von Mimikry, die ich liebe und unwillkürlich übe. Ich versuchte einmal eine Definition des Stiles zu geben, indem ich sagte, er sei eine geheimnisvolle Anpassung des Persönlichen an das Sachliche (*Br.*, 162-163).

In contrast to the simplifications of the expressionistic style, Mann advocates a flexible kind of writing which permits the author to adapt himself to his subject matter in a loving manner. This is called parody. The passage becomes much clearer if it is seen in the light of a certain adaptation in *Der Tod in Venedig* to Goethe's style.

Even if parody is seen in this light the passage from *Betrachtungen* differs from other statements about *Der Tod in Venedig*. "Severität" (XI, 126) and "Strenge" (XI, 608) are words used to characterize the work. Others, as we have seen, compare it with a pure crystal. Directly contradicting the parody-designation are a number of statements like this in the letter to Carl Maria von Weber: "Daß aber die Novelle im Kerne hymnisch geartet, ja eines hymnischen Ursprungs ist, kann Ihnen nicht entgangen sein" (*Br.*, 176). In the same letter, he quotes a passage from "Gesang vom Kindchen" which refers to the origin of *Der Tod in Venedig*: "Höherer Rausch, ein außerordentlich Fühlen . . . Hymnisch erhob sich da deine Seele . . ." But the desire to write in verses was restrained, "es ward dir das *trunkene Lied* zur *sittlichen Fabel*" (*Br.*, 177).<sup>33</sup> The desire to write the Aschenbach story in verses may be an exaggeration of the "Gefühl eines gewissen absoluten Wandels, einer gewissen souveränen Getragenheit . . . , wie ich es sonst nicht gekannt hatte . . . ," as he describes it in "Lebensabriß" (XI, 124). In a letter to Hülsen, written July 22, 1920, Mann, giving advice, tells of the difficulties of avoiding

cheap sentimentality ("kitschiges Pathos") "wenn das Lied in höherem Tone geht." *Der Tod in Venedig* is mentioned as an example.

It seems that both "hymnal" excitement and adaptation to Goethe, i.e., loving, revering and, simultaneously to some extent, satirical parody, had a part in *Der Tod in Venedig*. Nevertheless, the assertion that the part parody played in *Der Tod in Venedig* was a very important one seems at least partially to be a reaction against some critics who took offense to the "classical," i.e. non-modern, elements in the story. If something is called a parody, its intellectual character is emphasized (cf. XII, 101). That critics operate on too low a level is quite a familiar accusation; not infrequently it was justified in Mann's case.

The use of the words "das trunkene Lied" in the passage from "Gesang vom Kindchen" is one of the rare allusions to Nietzsche in Thomas Mann's comments on Aschenbach's story, although Aschenbach's decision "das Wissen zu leugnen . . . sofern es den Willen, die Tat, das Gefühl und selbst die Leidenschaft im geringsten zu lähmen, zu entmutigen, zu entwürdigen geeignet ist . . ." (VIII, 454-455) certainly displays a debt to Nietzsche.

Although he opposed expressionistic one-sidedness, Mann preferred to state that, in Aschenbach, he participated in the new movement of simplification, in the attempt to conquer relativism. This interpretation of Aschenbach's story is found in various shades in *Betrachtungen*:

Ich gehöre geistig jenem über ganz Europa verbreiteten Geschlecht von Schriftstellern an, die, aus der *décadence* kommend, zu Chronisten und Analytikern der *décadence* bestellt, gleichzeitig den emanzipatorischen Willen zur Absage an sie . . . im Herzen tragen (XII, 201).

Soon afterwards a reference to *Der Tod in Venedig* is made. "Decadence" may or may not bear a reference to Nietzsche here. It is probably meant in a rather general sense, signifying an end of an epoch characterized by an overemphasis on self-analysis due to and supported by idleness. The following quotation is from the same chapter of *Betrachtungen*:

Auch sehe ich wohl, wie etwa die Erzählung "Der Tod in Venedig" in der Zeit steht, dicht vor dem Kriege steht, in ihrer Willensspannung und ihrer Morbidität: sie ist auf ihre Art etwas Letztes, das Spätwerk einer Epoche, auf welches ungewisse Lichter des Neuen fallen (XII, 212).

Nothing indicates that "das Neue" refers to what is really new in Mann's works, namely the vivid experience of myth which comprises life and death, which unites artistic phantasy and reality on a higher plane. The observer of Mann's works in their entirety recognizes that from *Der Tod in Venedig*, through an undercurrent in *Der Zauberberg*, this aspect of Mann's world leads to *Joseph und seine Brüder*. The context of the passage in *Betrachtungen*, however, suggests that by "das Neue" Mann means war

and expressionism and their common effect of reducing humanity to the immediate forces of life. In the introduction to *Betrachtungen*, which was written after the main work was completed, he again referred to "das Neue" by quoting from the second chapter of *Der Tod in Venedig* (VIII, 454-455). He had made clear in several places in *Betrachtungen*, "inwiefern ich mit dem Neuen zu tun habe, inwiefern auch in mir etwas ist von jener 'Entschlossenheit,' jener Absage an den 'unanständigen Psychologismus' der abgelaufenen Epoche, an ihr laxes und formwidriges tout comprendre,—von einem Willen also, den man anti-naturalistisch, anti-impressionistisch, anti-relativistisch nennen möge . . ." (XII, 28). It is evident that Mann's discussion with the expressionists pushed him to a wrong critical level by virtue of his recognition that the expressionists incorporated the new, while his writings were late products of nineteenth-century decadence. Although he later frequently maintained the greatness of the nineteenth century,<sup>34</sup> this and other passages from *Betrachtungen* as well as later self-interpretations of his works as the products of "Spätkultur,"<sup>35</sup> invited the simplifications of certain critics.<sup>36</sup>

A passage in *Betrachtungen* occurring in the chapter "Vom Glauben" is more complicated. Mann reflects on the danger of absolute freedom for the artist, quoting Claudel, Rodin and Nietzsche who said that the absence of outer tyrants causes the absence of will, the inner tyrant, in the "higher artist." The age, Mann says, is looking for a new faith, for a moral solidification, and he claims to have known about that; he presented the new morality not the way a prophet or propagandist (like the "Zivilisations-literat") would do it, but as a work of art, i.e. on an experimental basis, "ohne letzte Verbindlichkeit." He continues:

In einer Erzählung stellte ich Versuche an mit der Absage an den Psychologismus und Relativismus der ausklingenden Epoche, ich ließ ein Künstlertum der "Erkenntnis um ihrer selbst willen" den Abschied geben, dem "Abgrund" die Sympathie aufsagen und zum Willen, zur Wertbeurteilung, zur Intoleranz, zur "Entschlossenheit" sich wenden. Ich gab alldem einen katastrophalen, das heißt: einen skeptisch-pessimistischen Ausgang. Daß ein Künstler *Würde* gewinnen könne, stellte ich in Zweifel, ich ließ meinen Helden, der es versucht hatte, erfahren und gestehen, daß es nicht möglich sei . . . Dem Versuch einen skeptisch-pessimistischen Ausgang zu geben: eben dies schien mir *moralisch*,—wie es mir künstlerisch schien (XII, 517).<sup>37</sup>

Morality for Thomas Mann, the disciple of Nietzsche, lay in a recognition of a truth that hurts. In this sense a skeptical moral conclusion can be an artistic one too. However, this moral-artistic interpretation of Aschenbach's fate must be evaluated in the light of the previous statement about Aschenbach's fate, which was to be understood only experimentally and without a final binding force, i.e. mainly artistically. The tragedy of Aschenbach's dignity has actually very little to do with morality in any general sense which is not related to the premises inherent in Aschenbach's



fictional character, namely that of a "Leistungsethiker" (XII, 145).<sup>38</sup> The passage which was quoted above can only be understood in the context of *Betrachtungen* which, as a whole, attempts to show that an aesthetic sense of tragedy, a willingness to accept truths that hurt, have a higher moral value than any doctrine which solves every problem by means of the same set of phrases. Nevertheless, this quotation is among the more conclusive self-interpretations of *Der Tod in Venedig* for it recognizes its artistic, i.e. experimental, inconclusive character, the union of playfulness with inner necessity that represents true art. It also points once more to an aspect of the true essence of the work, the existential transformation Aschenbach has to undergo, the question of the dignity of an artist, "die Tragödie der Entwürdigung" (XI, 125). But the passage offers the incorrect conclusion that in *Der Tod in Venedig* dignity is once and for all denied to the artist. One cannot come to that conclusion from the text itself, even less so when the Goethe-origin and its final realization in *Lotte in Weimar* is considered. For just as the ridiculously formal Goethe in that novel never really loses dignity, neither does Aschenbach reach a final degradation. An ambiguous artistic quality which is lost in most of Mann's self-interpretations is always maintained in *Der Tod in Venedig*.

Aschenbach's dignity is partially based on the respect he enjoys in society. However, this position was called fictitious by Mann in a letter to Jakob Wassermann written in 1921:

Daß Deutschland keine Gesellschaft hat, daß der deutsche Romanschreiber niemals die nationale Stellung einnehmen kann, die er etwa in Frankreich einnimmt (im "Tod in Venedig" habe ich so getan, als könne er es),—das sind Gegebenheiten, die man hinnehmen muß.<sup>39</sup>

Fortunately, *Der Tod in Venedig* is predominantly fiction. Neither an intention to parody classicism prevails nor an essayistic evaluation of the intellectual situation of the period. And it is just this fictional character, neglected in Mann's self-interpretations, which has determined the place of the work in the history of German literature.

Expressionistic simplification (and that of some George disciples like his friend Bertram) was later seen by Thomas Mann in one perspective with National Socialism. He did not call the movements identical, but he seems to have felt that all intellectual simplifications had paved the way for National Socialism. Reflections of this view are found abundantly in *Doktor Faustus*. Leverkühn himself with his "Durchbruch" idea has many elements of the expressionist, including the prohibition of his works under National-Socialist rule.<sup>40</sup>

A number of late comments on *Der Tod in Venedig* must be seen in this light. They are derived from the interpretation of *Der Tod in Venedig* reached during World War I. In "Leiden an Deutschland," which was



based on Mann's diary of 1933-1934 and published in 1946 with some additions, we find the following passage. With reference to the attack made on him because of his "Leiden and Größe Richard Wagners,"<sup>41</sup> he writes:

Da tun sie sich, ich weiß nicht was, zugute, weil sie die "Fesseln einer tötenden Verstandesanalyse gesprengt" haben, und bedenken nicht, daß der, gegen den sie sich dieser Weisheit rühmen, den "Tod in Venedig" geschrieben hat, worin er ihre Gedanken schon zwanzig Jahre früher gehabt hat . . . (XII, 708).

Even more obviously than in this quotation, the origin of this line of comment in *Betrachtungen* is recognizable in a passage from "Bruder Hitler" (1938-1939):

Der "Tod in Venedig" weiß manches von Absage an den Psychologismus der Zeit, von einer neuen Entschlossenheit und Vereinfachung der Seele, mit der ich es freilich ein tragisches Ende nehmen ließ. Ich war nicht ohne Kontakt mit den Hängen und Ambitionen der Zeit, mit dem, was kommen wollte und sollte, mit Strebungen, die zwanzig Jahre später zum Geschrei der Gasse wurden (XII, 850).

The same view, somewhat more detailed, is presented in an unpublished letter to Agnes Meyer of May 30, 1938. All of these passages continue with statements to the effect that Mann despises the "verdorbene Wirklichkeitsausprägung" of what he had conceived in 1911.

Aschenbach's decision to disregard knowledge, if it can weaken the will, has only a remote relationship to fascism because both Aschenbach's theory and some fascist theories and practices can be traced to Nietzsche. Fascism is a "verdorbene Wirklichkeitsausprägung" of Nietzsche's writings rather than of *Der Tod in Venedig*. To a large degree it was Mann's affinity to Nietzsche which caused him to despise National Socialism because this movement had dragged Nietzsche from the aesthetic level, where his writings belong, down to a reality which the stubborn stupidity of its rulers had rendered offensive.

Mann was sensitive to criticism in general, but especially when his *Betrachtungen* and other war-time essays were held against him during the time he fought for democracy by addressing big rallies in this country. When Henri Peyre wrote a letter to *Atlantic Monthly* quoting from Mann's war-time essays, he answered Peyre in a comparatively long article called "In my Defense." In it he praises the view of Georg Lukács, "a literary historian of communist persuasion," who had balanced Mann's war-time opinions against *Der Tod in Venedig*: "my Fredericianism of that time, my apology for the Prussian attitude, could not possibly be properly judged psychologically unless viewed in conjunction with my short story *Death in Venice* which appeared before the war, and in which the Prussian ethos suffers a fall of the most ironic tragedy."<sup>42</sup> A similar quotation from Lukács appears in "Die Entstehung des Doktor Faustus."

Denn Heinrich Manns "Untertan" und Thomas Manns "Tod in Venedig" kann man bereits als große Vorläufer jener Tendenz betrachten, die die Gefahr einer barbarischen Unterwelt innerhalb der modernen deutschen Zivilisation als ihr notwendiges Komplementärprodukt signalisiert haben (XI, 239-240).

These simplifications are almost too obvious to require comment. If one compares the formulations in *Betrachtungen*, however, one must admit that Lukács only followed the lead of the author. *Der Untertan*—not a bad work, but written in a style with no real claim for greatness—ends up at the side of *Der Tod in Venedig* by reason of its subject matter; this is only a consequence of the interpretation on the level of ideology which Mann had started.

Mann, who actually knew better, frequently showed his ambition to measure up to essayistic and critical writers and their intellectual grasp of the time. Occasionally he did so by offering dichotomies which have quite a virulent affinity to the mind of critics, and especially Mann-critics. In the essay "Über die Ehe" of 1925 he equates Thomas Buddenbrook and Aschenbach, "diese Flucht ins Metaphysische ist Ausdruck desselben Prozesses von Auflösung der Lebenszucht, von 'Heimkehr' in die orgiastische Freiheit des Individualismus, den ich im 'Tod in Venedig' in Gestalt der Knabenliebe noch einmal geschildert habe. Immer flossen die Begriffe des Individualismus und des Todes mir zusammen" (X, 200). This is at least not exclusively related to the second chapter, but the formula "Leben-Tod" brings this interpretation down again to one inconclusive level.<sup>43</sup>

Death in the Venetian story is seen as a "verführerische widersittliche Macht" in the letter of September 6, 1915, which revealed the Goethe-Ulrike theme and the problem of the dignity of the artist as its origin (*Br.*, 123). The temptation to give in to Death's power is sometimes called a romantic one; *Der Tod in Venedig*, Mann says, showed that he was at home "in der verführerisch todverbundenen Stadt, der romantischen Stadt par excellence" (XI, 392). Consequently, the story can be called along with "Tonio Kröger" and *Der Zauberberg* an "erzromantische Konzeption" (*Br.*, 255). This was not meant in a negative sense, and it is equally positive when he states with satisfaction in two addresses in Vienna that *Der Tod in Venedig* found its best readers in that city, for "Wien . . . weiß vom Tode" (XI, 369-371).<sup>44</sup>

The fact of the matter is that Aschenbach's story contains all of these aspects and more: Aschenbach's dignity and his humiliation by the forces of life which overtake him finally in the moment of death; his sense of form and composure contrasted to his growing preparedness to transform that sense and open himself to the new experience of the mythical world which is life and death simultaneously. True, the reader is made to feel sorry for Aschenbach when the latter is overpowered by his passion, and when he has himself made up as a false youth. But this degradation is the

element of tragedy which gives the story its finality, which makes Aschenbach's experience a definite one, after which he cannot return to banal reality. The artistic character of the work rests on this finality as well as on the many aspects, many facets, which come alive in Mann's language.

But most of Mann's self-interpretations view the work on one level while its value lies in its play on several. The simplified aspect always offers some critical insight but it leaves the work tarnished; the reader cannot be blamed for taking the author's interpretations more seriously than those written by others. Therefore, criticising the self-criticism is worthwhile because it helps to set the work free so that it may be viewed in its freshness. Mann was essentially a teller of tales, more on the naive than on the intellectual side. But so is every true artist whose intelligence does not prevent him from marveling at the richness of the world and who is mainly employed in the process of bringing this richness to artistic relevance.

#### NOTES

1. *Monatshefte*, L (1958), 256-257. This note by Mautner does not give the complete text of the letter, but Franz H. Mautner assured me that he had quoted everything that is relevant to *Der Tod in Venedig*.
2. Herbert Lehnert, "Thomas Mann's Early Interest in Myth and Erwin Rohde's *Psyche*," *PMLA*, LXXIX (1964), 297-304. Mautner had discovered the evidence for himself shortly after I did. On my request, he had graciously given the above mentioned article priority over his own intended publication.
3. References in text and notes are to Thomas Mann, *Gesammelte Werke in zwölf Bänden* (Frankfurt, 1960).
4. T. J. Reed, "Thomas Mann, Heine, Schiller: The Mechanics of Self-Interpretation," *Neophilologus*, XLVII (1963), 48.
5. Thomas Mann, *Briefe 1889-1936*, ed. Erika Mann (Frankfurt, 1961), p. 177. Hereafter quoted "Br." in the text. The Hülsen letters are not accessible at present; none of them has been published. The second volume of letters covering the period from 1937-1947 contains only a few unimportant references to *Der Tod in Venedig*. They are mentioned in fns. 10, 36, and 42 of this article.
6. Cf. Thomas Mann, *Briefe an Paul Amann 1915-1952* (Lübeck, 1959), p. 32. The wording is largely identical.
7. Original in the Library of Congress. The printing in *Germanic Review*, XXXVI, 195-196 must be collated with *GR*, XXXIX, 33-34. The story of Goethe's race may have been taken from Biedermann, *Goethes Gespräche* (Leipzig, 1909), v. II, pp. 271-272. This passage refers not to Ulrike von Levetzow and Marienbad, but to Goethe's sojourn in Wiesbaden in 1814 and Philippine Lade. It seems to have been a rather unimportant incident. I wish to thank Hans Eichner, who placed his unpublished dissertation "Thomas Mann's Relation to Goethe" (London, 1949) at my disposal; this source is identified there on p. 127.
8. *Die Neue Rundschau*, XXXVI, 611-616.
9. Cf. Arthur Eloesser, *Thomas Mann: Sein Leben und sein Werk* (Berlin, 1925), which contains much information which could only have been supplied by the author.
10. This is actually a set of two lectures. The typescript of the German original is

in the Thomas Mann Archiv der Eidgenössischen Technischen Hochschule in Zürich; an English copy is in a private collection in this country; another copy of the English translation is in Zürich. There are some later comments to the same effect, e.g. *Briefe 1937-1947* (Frankfurt, 1963), p. 40.

11. Cf. Reed, *Neophilologus*, XXXVII, 46.
12. He also told this to Otto Zareck (Otto Zareck, "Neben dem Werk," *Die Neue Rundschau*, XXXVI [1925], 621-622).  
It may be noted that Thomas Mann mentioned *Die Wahlverwandschaften* with praise in a note on *Fiorenza* probably written during the writing of *Der Tod in Venedig* and published in 1912 (XI, 563).
13. The following examples are taken from Hans Eichner's unpublished dissertation (see fn. 7), pp. 137-138: *Wahlverwandschaften*: "Er fragte nach mehreren Arbeitern; man versprach sie und stellte sie im Laufe des Tages. Aber auch diese sind ihm nicht genug, um seine Vorsätze schleunig ausgeführt zu sehen. Das Schaffen macht ihm keine Freude mehr; es soll alles schon fertig sein, und für wen?" (*Hamburger Ausgabe*, VI, 327-328). *Der Tod in Venedig*: "... da es ihm an kleinerem Gelde fehlte, ging er hinüber in das der Dampferbrücke benachbarte Hotel, um dort zu wechseln und den Ruderer nach Gutdünken abzulohnen. Er wird in der Halle bedient, er kehrt zurück, er findet sein Reisegut auf einem Karren am Quai, und Gondel und Gondolier sind verschwunden" (VIII, 467). The change from historical past to historical present is not unusual (cf. Käte Hamburger, *Die Logik der Dichtkunst* [Stuttgart, 1957], pp. 49-72), but the connection of this phenomenon with similar short phrases is striking. An example for the aphoristic style: "Der Haß ist parteiisch, aber Liebe ist es noch mehr. Auch Ottilie entfremdete sich einigermaßen von Charlotten und dem Hauptmann" (*Hamburger Ausgabe*, VI, 329). "Glück des Schriftstellers ist der Gedanke, der ganz Gefühl, ist das Gefühl, das ganz Gedanke zu werden vermag. Solch ein pulsender Gedanke, solch genaues Gefühl gehörte und gehorchte dem Einsamen damals . . ." (VIII, 492). Eichner treats also the occurrence of "strange accidental signs" in both works. Another characteristic is the occurrence of obsolete words in Mann's narration such as "verschreiben" (VIII, 494) (cf. *Hamburger Ausgabe*, VI, 322). See also Eichner's *Thomas Mann: Eine Einführung in sein Werk* (Bern, 1961), p. 33. The first author to notice common traits in *Die Wahlverwandschaften* and *Der Tod in Venedig* was Hans Leppmann, *Thomas Mann* (Berlin, 1915), pp. 136-137. Richard Hinton Thomas has investigated the same complex with different results; see his article "'Die Wahlverwandschaften' and Mann's 'Der Tod in Venedig,'" *Publications of the English Goethe Society*, N.S. XXIV (1955), 101-130; and the chapter in his book *Thomas Mann: The Mediation of Art* (Oxford, 1956), pp. 59-84, dealing with *Der Tod in Venedig*.
14. Cf. Thomas Mann, *Briefe an Paul Amann 1915-1952*, p. 30: "Bekenntnisse des Hochstaplers Felix Krull,—ein grundwunderliches Unternehmen, die Karikatur der großen Autobiographie und im Styl selbst eine Parodie auf 'Dichtung und Wahrheit,' aber positiv endlich doch in seiner verzerrten Lyrik" (1915). Furthermore cf. XI, 700-703, written 1916. In this introduction to a reading from the early chapters of *Krull*, he quotes from an article of 1913 (X, 559). This quotation contained a quotation from Goethe's "Alles geben die Götter. . . ." In both articles he links autobiography to the German humanistic tradition.
15. A. Kantorowicz, *Heinrich und Thomas Mann* (Berlin, 1956), p. 83.
16. Original in Stadtbibliothek München. Cf. the almost identical wording in Thomas Mann's letter to Heinrich Mann of January 10, 1910. Kantorowicz, *Heinrich und Thomas Mann*, p. 85.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 88; *Br.*, 82.
18. Cf. Victor Lange's interpretation of *Felix Krull*: "Betrachtungen zur Thematik von Felix Krull," *Germanic Review*, XXXI (1956), 215-224.
19. *Hamburger Ausgabe* IX, 585-587.
20. To Auguste Hauschner. Copy in Thomas Mann Archiv bei der Deutschen Akademie der Wissenschaften at Berlin.
21. Partially dependent on the text in "Lebensabriß" is "Preface" in *Stories of Three Decades* (New York, 1936), p. VII-VIII. Cf. also Mann to Mautner, *Monatshefte*, L, 256: "doch wohl der fazettenreichste Kristall, der mir zusammengeschossen." Occasionally the simile is used for *Der Zauberberg*: XI, 395.
22. To be sure, earlier experience also will have contributed, especially Mann's relationship to Paul Ehrenberg, which probably had some restrained homoerotic overtones and occurred at a time when Mann was toying with suicide ideas. Cf. letter to Heinrich Mann of March 7, 1901 (*Br.*, 26-27). Also the youthful Tonio Kröger-Hans Hansen episode is autobiographical; cf. XI, 99-100, confirmed by an unpublished letter to Hermann Lange, a school fellow of Mann, written March 19, 1955.
23. "Richard Wagners Tod in Venedig," *Euphorion*, LII (1958), 378-396.
24. J. Hofmiller, "Thomas Manns neue Erzählung," *Süddeutsche Monatshefte*, X (1913), 224-225. For modern treatment of classical myth in *Der Tod in Venedig* see Franz H. Mautner, "Die griechischen Anklänge in Thomas Manns 'Tod in Venedig,'" *Monatshefte*, XLIV (1952), 20-26; André von Gronicka, "Myth plus Psychology: A Style Analysis of *Death in Venice*," *Germanic Review*, XXXI (1956), 191-205; Fritz Martini, *Das Wagnis der Sprache* (Stuttgart, 1954), pp. 176-224.
25. *Briefe an Paul Amann*, p. 32; cf. Wegener's commentary, pp. 94-95.
26. *Ibid.*, November 7, 1915, p. 38.
27. Details in "Anmerkungen zur Entstehungsgeschichte von Thomas Manns *Bekenntnisse des Hochstaplers Felix Krull*, *Der Zauberberg* und *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen*," *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*, XXXVIII (1964), 267-272. In 1941, Mann refers once more to the classical element in the Venetian story. When he found Hermes Psychopompos designated "als wesentlich kindliche Gottheit" in Karl Kerenyi's essay, "Das göttliche Kind," he expresses his joy, "es erinnerte mich an Tazio im 'Tod in Venedig'" (XI, 651).
28. *N. R.*, XXV, 1474; cf. VIII, 455.
29. "Der Gedanke, der ganz Gefühl, das Gefühl, das ganz Gedanke zu werden vermag . . . das ist der Geist" (cf. VIII, 492), "Gute Feldpost." See Hans Bürgin, *Das Werk Thomas Manns* (Frankfurt, 1959), item V, 89. Dr. Bürgin was kind enough to place a photostat of this article at my disposal.
30. *Briefe an Paul Amann*, p. 29.
31. An almost identical sentence in *Br.*, 123, written four days earlier. Preceding it, the following statement is found: "Der einzelne Kritiker sieht immer nur gewisse Seiten der Sache, gewisse Absichten des Autors, und das Bild [,] das er giebt [*sic*], wird immer der Ergänzung bedürfen. Es wird sich aber nicht sehr anders verhalten, wenn der Autor selbst den Kritiker seines Werkes zu machen versucht . . ."
32. *Briefe an Paul Amann*, pp. 31-32.
33. Cf. VIII, 1069. Das "trunkene Lied" is, of course, a Zarathustra allusion.
34. E.g. in "Leiden und Größe Richard Wagners," IX, 363-426.
35. E.g., XI, 690-691.

36. E.g., Walter Muschg in *Tragische Literaturgeschichte* (Bern, 1952), pp. 402-404. For a typical self-interpretation by Thomas Mann involving decadence see *Briefe 1937-1947*, p. 393f. *Der Tod in Venedig* is called here "auch nicht einwandfrei." But Mann balances this with the figure of the novelist in *Beim Propheten*, a self-portrait.
37. A similar passage had appeared earlier in *Betrachtungen*, XII, 197.
38. In this passage in *Betrachtungen* Mann also tries to attribute to this category, which is obviously his answer to decadence-fiction, a more general character, calling it a "modern heroische Lebensform und -haltung."
39. Printed in Martha Karlweis, *Jakob Wassermann: Bild, Kampf, und Werk* (Amsterdam, 1935), p. 333.
40. Cf. André von Gronicka, "Thomas Mann's *Doktor Faustus*: Prolegomena to an Interpretation," *Germanic Review*, XXIII (1948), 206-218, esp. 207 and 212.
41. Part of it quoted in Kurt Sontheimer, *Thomas Mann und die Deutschen* (München, 1961), pp. 109-110.
42. *Atlantic Monthly*, CLXXIV, (October, 1944), p. 101. The same passage in German in *Briefe 1937-1947*, p. 353. The articles by Lukács are "Preußentum in der deutschen Literatur," *Internationale Literatur*, Moscow, May 1944; and "Auf der Suche nach dem Bürger," *Internationale Literatur*, Moscow, June 7, 1945. See K. W. Jonas, *Fifty Years of Thomas Mann Studies* (Minneapolis, 1955), item 1104.
43. Cf. XI, 174-175: "Ideen über Tod und Form, das Ich und das Objektive mochten dem Verfasser einer venezianischen Novelle wohl als Erinnerung an sich selbst gelten."
44. Cf. XI, 400.